

Precis of Presentation to the Scientific Advisory Board

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USSR INTENTIONS AND CAPABILITIES

The role of military power in Soviet policy must be deduced from an analysis of that policy which has as its objective the advancement of Soviet power without risking the survival of that power's base. The USSR is thus against initiating general war and is avoiding serious risk thereof. But they will remain willing to exploit counter-deterrents especially when risks are low and the action is indirect. The foregoing pattern will probably persist even though Soviet capabilities are enhanced; in other words, we do not expect them to become deliberately aggressive just because they cross certain thresholds of relative power.

The possibilities of general war remain for the most part in the escalation of local hostilities or other forms of miscalculation on both sides. Should such a general war eventuate, Soviet strategic concept would be based on four principles: (1) focus on destruction of military forces, (2) coordinated use of available military means, (3) simultaneous ground action directed toward seizing and occupying key terrain, and (4) non-equivalence of mutual devastation to mutual defeat.

The important new look in Soviet strategic thinking that has emerged over the past half decade accords increased importance to surprise and leads them to consider the use of a preemptive attack which, because it would not be at a time of their own deliberate choosing, is to be carefully distinguished from preventive war.

The capabilities of the USSR as envisaged and created in support of its strategy are discussed on the basis of National Intelligence Estimate 11-8-59 and current intelligence community's reexamination of that paper. Particular attention is directed toward their requirements for ICBM's and the likely rate of buildup over the next three years.

The key question is whether or not the Soviets are building up with the aim of achieving decisive military superiority over the U.S. The conclusions reached are that this is not the case largely because of the extreme difficulties which would confront the Soviet were they to attempt to knock out the U.S. retaliatory forces sufficiently to insure that the USSR would not suffer unacceptable damage in return. This involves of course a speculative assumption as to the physical and population losses which the Soviet would consider tolerable.

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A final possibility, that the Soviets have as their goal the achievement of a position merely of minimum deterrence focused on U.S. population centers, is analyzed and rejected.

The conclusion is that the Soviets are aiming toward a mid-course -- sufficient military power to (1) defend and maintain the Soviet system, (2) enable them to give a good account of themselves in the event general war eventuates, (3) engage in and keep localized limited hostilities, and (4) support a forceful and active foreign policy.

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